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Service sector in terms of changing environment

## Eating out on vacation

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### Abstract

Eating out is an emerging trend all over the world, especially now when eating in front of other people aren't a taboo anymore. The popularization of this trend is evident from the beginning of the 90s when the economies have gotten stronger, and since it has been growing. There are many forms of eating out, and many locations where food can be consume away from our residence. This paper will be focusing on eating out during a vacation, when people are on holiday away from their home, and their residential city. The goal will be to stress the differences that exist between eating out at our hometown and eating out when in another city (or even more important abroad) on a vacation. To do so, we are going to introduce the reader to the meaning of eating out and the locations where people can dine outside their home, focusing on the locations that are relevant for eating out on holidays. Then we are going to explain the basic behavior of people when consuming food during a vacation, focusing on the choices they make, the time when the food is consumed and so on. At the end we are going to make the difference between eating out on vacation and eating out in our hometown, so we can give some basic instructions to hospitality facilities owners on how to attract more people to dine at their facility.

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## 1. Introduction

Although when we mention consuming food outside of our home it is commonly associated with visiting a restaurant, eating out isn't that simple. Today visiting a cinema isn't just plain enjoyment in the movie, but also enjoying food and drink as well. When we are visiting a ZOO at the entrance we are welcomed by stands that offer food not just for us, but the animals as well. During sports events we are being offered different types of snacks and some sorts of fast food. When visiting friends or relatives we are offered and we are consuming some sort of food or drinks, almost always. These are just few examples of where we can consume food outside our home, and that clearly show that eating out cannot be simplified to only a visit to a restaurant.

From the above we can conclude that the main characteristic of eating out is something that we all know, and that is to go out of our home and consume food to some other place, usually in the presence of other people. These people are united by one common goal –consuming food outside their home. They can be a close circle of individuals that more or less know each other (for example during a conference, or a birthday party) or a group of people that don't know each other (e.g. restaurant).

## 2. Locations of eating out

Consuming food outside the home can be done in numerous locations. We are using the term "locations" instead of locals or objects because food can be consumed in open spaces that aren't objects. The basic classification of the locations of eating out that we are giving is based on the economical aspects, whether the place where the food is consumed is doing that for a profit (economical gain) or not. Using these criteria the locations can be divided in commercial and non-commercial locations.

### 2.1 Commercial locations of eating out

The commercial locations for eating out are those locations that make profit by selling food to customers. This category includes restaurants, ZOOs, cinemas, sport arenas, workplace and schools and similar.

The restaurants are the basic and main representatives of the commercial locations of eating out. They are also the first place that we think when we hear about eating out. The pleasure in eating out in restaurant can be found in so many simple things, like: the anonyms and representing yourself as someone else; consuming exotic food that is not usual for the home; the atmosphere; the feeling of higher value and being part of a specific class in the society; being served by someone else and much more.

The ZOO is another location of eating out that offers food. The modern ZOOs usually take between 4-6 hours, which mean food is necessary to replenish the energy. That's why today besides the standard kiosks and stands for fast food and snacks, full-service restaurants can be found.

If we go to a sport event we will immediately notice the role of food there. As a part of the sport arenas, even in Macedonia, in front of or inside the arena, different types of snacks are sold. In the States the hotdog is the most popular "sports" food.

Very successfully the managers of the cinemas have seen the need of food consumption during a movie projection. Today besides the traditional early food –like popcorn and soft drinks, a complete meal can be consumed in a restaurant that is part of the multiplex cinema. Snacks are also available.

The dynamic life requires consuming food at work. Almost without an exception one main meal is consumed at the working environment. That can be done in the canteen in our work place, the restaurant nearby, food brought from home and consumed at work etc. The same is characteristic for consuming food at school with the difference that the health issues are more stressed at these locations.

## *2.2. Noncommercial locations of eating out*

The non-commercial locations are the places where eating out is done without paying. This can be done in places that we visit with a previous invitation (like parties, seminars and conferences, house celebrations, name days and birthdays, weddings and such) or we can talk about locations where the food consumed is previously prepared in our home and taken to that location (usually a picnics spots, excursions and so on).

Visiting friends and relatives that includes consuming food is the main representatives of the noncommercial locations of eating out. That is so because we are being invited to someone's whose on daily basis, whether it's a coffee invitation, lunch invitation or some special occasion. These locations are usually connected to some sort of occasion like birthdays, celebrations of a saint, anniversaries and so on. But often these visits to our friends or relatives hoses are not connected to some special occasion. This has become so common and often in our society that refusing an invitation to someone's home for lunch (without any good reason) is considered to be really rude.

Attending different symposiums, seminars and conferences are also noncommercial places of eating out. Each of these occasions has some sort of refreshment brake and organized lunch for its attendants. Going on picnic and excursion is also a form of eating out. The main characteristic of these locations are consuming food on open grounds, locations that usually aren't some closed space. The food consumed usually is prepared in our home and consumed here.

Today the promotion of a product is very important. That's why during these occasions, that may take place in different objects (from luxurious hotels to modest cabins, or open grounds) having food and drink is a must have, mainly because the guests need to have refreshment. Another reason is that the attendants may get a better impression and buy the product.

These are only few of the commercial and noncommercial locations where food can be consumed outside the home. We stated only few because we thought these were the most important locations so the reader can get a clearer picture on what eating out includes, and so that it shouldn't be considered a simple act of eating out in restaurants only.

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### **3. Eating out on vacation**

The dynamics of any given working position is forcing the need of a yearly vacation that every worker would rather have. Going on vacation is anticipated with great joy. Starting with the planning itself, the decisions made on the period and time spent, the choice of destination and type of accommodation, as well as the planning of the activities taken during the vacation is causing huge excitement. The main purpose is renewing our energy, regaining our fatigue.

The feeding during a vacation and stay in a tourist destination is a necessity and differs from consuming food at home, and even from consuming food outside of home at the city of our residence. These differences come from the main purpose of the vacation –having fun, relaxation, and regeneration of our lost energy. In this paper we are going to use the research of Pet Caplan (Caplan P., 1997) so we can get a clearer picture about the habits of feeding, as well as cooking during a vacation. The main methods of collecting data that he used are interviews with people that are on a vacation.

#### *3.1. The role of food when choosing an accommodation facility*

When food is the only attraction that motivates tourists to visit a specific location it has shown that this meaning of food is small. But this conclusion doesn't mean that food doesn't play any role in the further decisions and choices made when on vacation. It has turned that the food plays an important role, and sometimes is the key factor of decision making, when choosing an accommodation facility. When we are talking about hotels, specifically, besides the hospitality of the hosts, the second decision making factor about the choice of hotel is the good food. This role of food has been confirmed by the previous mentioned research, mainly from regular visitors.

#### *3.2. Differences in the time structure of the meal*

Another difference that exists during the eating out during vacation compared to eating at the place of residence is how often we consume our meals and the time between each meal. This difference can be a result from the fact that during a vacation people don't go to work, nor do they have obligations at home. This topic about the numerous everyday obligations and the connection to all the activities during a meal preparation –buying food supplies, cooking and eating at home; compared to the relaxation during the vacation has turned out as significant between numerous interviewed subjects.

Also there is a difference made between cooking at home and cooking during a vacation. This statement is present between the subjects that were staying in facilities where they could care for themselves, and by that we mean they daily obligations were similar to those at home (half of the respondents were placed in this category). The main difference made when it comes to cooking is that the daily obligations and the dynamic pace of life are making cooking at home as short as possible, which means that simple meals that can be cooked fast are made, or frozen or takeaway food is ordered (of which the last one isn't cooked at home at all). This condition was noticed between the respondents that knew lots of recipes as well as having great conditions at the home kitchen and cooking skills, but they were avoiding the cooking of "real" and "right" meal because they were feeling tired after work. These individuals during the vacation are devoted to cooking a real, nutritious meal and spend as much time as necessary to do so. What was once an obligation at home, now it is fun and recreation for this people.

Another difference that is often pointed out is the time structure between meals during eating out at home and on vacation. This difference is especially noted at the respondents accommodated in hotels. This type of tourists considered the food enjoyment because of the structured meal –the exact time and time differences between the meals. This way they consume their food on right time intervals, without jumping a meal. While the level of enjoying the meal consumed on vacation at this locations for the mother of the family has a different dimension. It isn't generated from the structured meal as much as it comes from the fact that they are avoiding all the obligations connected to cooking. Consuming food on vacation for them represents a luxury that they are allowing themselves and in which they enjoy, especially because someone else is doing all those activities instead of them. On the other hand, the vacation for the mothers that are accommodated in facilities where they cook for themselves, especially families with small children, is very stressful.

### *3.3. Price as a factor*

What people will consume during their vacation depends on the price of the food/ meal as well. So, the middle class respondents have chosen an accommodation where they can cook for themselves, especially when we are talking about families with children. These respondents would rather prepare their meal by themselves and consume it where they are accommodated, than consuming a meal at a restaurant. It is interesting that the price has appeared in the discussions by different demographic structure of respondents –with different family functions and different jobs. By their statements it is clear that the hotels (and similar accommodations) are avoided mainly because of the price, but because of the formality as well.

The price as factor has influences on the choice of the hospitality facility where the food will be consumed, which is especially visible in the respondents that are accommodated in facilities where they tend to their needs but choose to consume food somewhere else. The choice of these families tends toward the pubs, although their food offer is plain and simple. The lower prices of pubs compared to restaurants are the main reason to make this decision.

### *3.4. Differences that come from the food function*

The contrast between food during vacation and food during the working days can be seen in another dimension –good used to replenish energy and food for pleasure. During the everyday meal the food is seen as necessity, what we need to fill our energy so we can finish all of our daily activities. During vacation the wish to enjoy in food consumption is much larger. And what is very important is that the enjoying isn't just in consuming quality good food, but it is created by other factors as well.

Hospitality facilities are chosen where a smiling face of the waiter will welcome us, where we are going to be seated in comfortable chairs from which we can enjoy the pleasant decorations of the facility, and where the atmosphere will be nice and offer opportunity to converse without talking too loud. That is the main reason to stay longer than usually in a restaurant that offers this much comfort.

### *3.5. Selecting food that will be consumed*

When the type of food that is consumed during a vacation compared to food at home the differences become more visible. Instead of cup of coffee and cigarette, a fast breakfast consisted of cereals and milk, or skipping the whole meal, during a vacation the breakfast becomes a very important meal that tends to be much more nutritious and a whole, full meal. The description given by the respondents about the

breakfast at home creates a picture of chaos –everything is happening in a hurry; during the vacation the picture is one of more harmony, a meal that takes time and in which is enjoyed.

It is interesting that even people that are cooking their breakfast on vacation are enjoying in the whole process, and consider this to be an ideal breakfast. This meal is looked as a “sweet sin” or taboo, and that’s what makes the breakfast a real treat that can be rarely afforded. It is interesting that in some statements about the breakfast some moral issues are stressed. We are going to explain this below.

### *3.6. Moral values during consumption*

The moral issues of food are more intense when the consumption of junk food is mentioned, especially potato chips. Although the potato chips is considered to be an inferior type of food, often it is considered a treat. These statements are especially visible at the mothers’ statements who care about the food consumption of their children and that tend to control what their children are eating. Considering the chips to be an unhealthy food, opposite to their children wishes they tend to avoid it as much as possible, by which it appears as topic of negotiations. Besides these statements what is considered inappropriate food at home is more acceptable when we are on a vacation. Therefore the people who are on vacation tend to consume more of this “forbidden food” (in this case potato chips), as well as more often.

The standards of acceptable frequency of consumption of “forbidden” food are also changed during a vacation. If this happens once or twice a week at home, during the vacation it may become a daily activity. That is so because of the fact that during the vacation everyone is more relaxed, so even the mother in the role of “food controller” that is implying healthy food standards give up on this role and allow their children to enjoy some more junk food.

When we are talking about this type of food it is interesting to mention the reverse effect at those people which are consuming it more often in their place of living. The respondents that were consuming potato chips every day (and some even two times a day) in their residential location, during the vacation they are feeding healthier, subconsciously avoiding that food. The consumption of this type of food becomes so low on the vacation that is near the level of no consumption at all, mainly because of the fact that the process of eating takes place in restaurants, and the time for snacks between the meals is lower.

### *3.7. The cultural factor*

During his research Caplan didn’t included the cultural factor. Therefore we would like to stress out the differences that exist in the culture of the tourists and the culture of the hosts as well as their influences of the food consumption during a vacation. First of all this differences are based on the choice of food that are available. The culture of the recipient people has created and established a traditional and national (as well as some local characteristics), that has become an attraction of that tourist destination, and that can be significantly different than the national food of the tourists. These differences can exist inside one country as well as one region of the country. That means that the visitors not only that they may not be able to consume their favourite meal, but they may not stand (feel repellent, sickness during digestion and so on) the local food of the tourist destination. Another problem can be the way the food is consumed (eg. The chopsticks used in China or by hand in India).

The solution of these problems can be seen through the process of globalization, especially through its influence of creating gastronomic homogeneity. This means that no matter where we are on vacation we will be able to find one of the standard meals (like hamburgers or pizza) or some of the world known restaurants. This solution of the problem, actually becomes a problem itself by influencing the quality and nutrition of the meal during a vacation on negative way.

Another influence is the gastronomic heterogeneity. This means that some of the food of another country can be found in our residential place. This means that we may have had some contact with the



food of the country (or place/ region) that we are going on vacation. By this when we go on vacation we can be very fond of the residential food.

At the end we can conclude that the food during vacation is different than the food when we are at home. That, above all, comes from the main purpose of the vacation: relaxing, renewing our energy, having fun. People have more time available to enjoy their meal and what they usually “can’t do at home”, to have a proper cooked and time consuming meal that will satisfy their appetite. The eating out during vacation is different from eating at home (in the house or out) regardless of the profession, class or status, function in the family or gender that the people may have.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Consuming food on vacations takes place on different locations, but what is most important is that it happens away from the town of residence. Because of this, as well as because of the goals of the vacations, the food consumed differs the eating out habits when at our hometown. From these differences that exist (that were previously described) in these two aspects of eating out very useful conclusions can be made that later on can be used by the hospitality workers in the tourist destinations as directions how to attract more visitors.

First of all we need to stress that the accommodation facilities need to pay huge attention to the food they offer to the guests, because the accommodation chosen may depend on it.

The managers of the hospitality facilities should be aware on the meaning that breakfast has during a vacation. The research has shown that the people on vacation almost always are having breakfast, and that the breakfast becomes one of the most important meals, a luxury and enjoyment. Therefore a huge attention should be given to what they offer to the guests during this meal. The wish of the guests to enjoy at this meal should be also considered, as well as the fact that they spend much time on this meal since they don’t want to rush it like they do at home. Therefore it is necessary during the breakfast a larger freedom to be given to the guests as well as a bigger time frame within the time when breakfast is served. This means that the hospitality works cannot expect for the guest to consume this meal and short time period, like one hour for example. Another important thing is when the time for breakfast is over not to rush away the guests that are still having one.

The research has shown that the price of the food is a very important factor in the choice of the facility where the food will be consumed, but as well as the accommodation facility. That is the main reason why the secondary accommodation facilities are preferred over the primary. If the hotels, motels and the rest of the primary accommodation facilities want to attract more guests that will stay in their facility, they can do that by manipulating the price of the food they offer in their restaurant. One of the best ways to do so is to provide all the guest (those who have paid for bed and breakfast, half pension or full pension) in that facility to consume food in the restaurant of the hotel or motel for prices that are lower than the regular ones. This way the guests can consume food (not the food they have already paid for in the price for the room) for prices that will be more available and attractive. Another way can be through offering a special menu for the guests staying in the accommodation facility, which besides the lower prices of the regular offered meals can also include some meals that aren’t offered to the other guests (ex. some national specialties).

Another very important change that occurs during the food consumption on vacation is the attitude toward the food that is considered “forbidden” or the food that is usually avoided. It should be considered that people during a vacation are feeling more relaxed and more free then when they are at their hometown. This means that the visitors will allow themselves to enjoy the food that they usually don’t consume or avoid out of health or any other reasons (for example the fast food that is reach with fat and salt and it’s not considered to be healthy now it may be consumed more often). This path of action that the guests may take should be considered by the restoratives, especially by those which aren’t in the fast

food industry. If they want to enlarge their demand with more tourists they need to include in their many some meals that are considered fast food (offering sandwiches or pizzas). Another way to make some extra profit is to offer different types of snacks (that usually are considered to be unhealthy) such as potato chips, flips and similar.

When the cultural differences between the people on vacation and the local residents are considered the hospitality workers should always have on mind the fact that this can be a barrier for consuming the local food, and can result in giving up to what is already known or standard (such as the fast food restaurants -burgers). Therefore this is a very important factor that should be considered by the restaurateurs. If their target are tourists then they should put more effort into making their menu more appealing and offer some universal and standard food. Then the problem of keeping the national food in the menu and its sales emerges. Therefore one of the following solutions can be applied: first a suitable combination of these two types of food should be made that will include both national and universal meals in the menu; and the second is to make the national food more appealing and more attractive (like avoiding some spices that make the food strong, or some ingredients that give the food bad visual appeal). Another thing to be considered are the habits of consuming food and how it is done. This means that the guests shouldn't be judged by their action, gesticulations, moves, attitudes or way of consuming food while eating out. The both sides should have understanding about the cultural differences and accept them. This goes double for the residential people if they want to have more visitors coming.

At the end we can make one general conclusion that there are differences between the food consumed at home when eating out and the eating out during a vacation. These differences are produced by few factors and are depending on the location where the food is consumed. If these factors are considered by the hospitality and tourist supply, above all the managers and owners of the hospitality industry that offer meals, they can be used to attract more visitors and tourists as well as enlarging their profit.

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